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Doing Things: How To Deal With Burnout

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STUDENT LIFE

Do you ever feel trapped inside your own mind? Lost in a maze of big essay deadlines, unwatched lectures, and approaching midterms? Completely freaking out and knowing you should get up and do some work but, instead, sitting in your room eating mac 'n' cheese straight out of the saucepan, while watching some guy review Lithuanian military rations on Youtube? What we have just described is neither laziness nor procrastination. What you are experiencing is just good ol' student burnout. Reasons for burnout could be the grey weather sucking your motivation, COVID restrictions thwarting all chances of fun, or even just the random Thursday gloomies. The main thing to remember is: burnout is normal. You are definitely not alone.

With another round of deadlines and tests coming up, we thought it would be a good idea to share some tips and tricks that worked to cure our gloomies:

Start Small: We are big fans of to-do lists. Crossing stuff off provides such a serotonin boost that we often make up tasks in an attempt to trick our systems into getting a free dopamine rush. One thing we have started to do is colour code our tasks in order of urgency. Pro tip: allot the highest priority slot to the micro-assignments, emails, etc. that you know will only take 5-10 minutes. Having the first task of the day be something low effort and quick really helps get over that work inertia. Once you have got the ball rolling, you can start gaining productivity and slowly build-up to the more daunting essays and projects.

Plan, Plan, Plan: A major source of stress during times of heavy workload is the sense of uncertainty and worry of what is yet to come. The feeling can be awfully overwhelming. Having a plan, even if not stringent, can act as a reassurance that you have the time to complete your tasks in an organized manner. Gone will be the constant concerns about how you will not be able to manage everything. Plus, with a plan, you will not waste any time thinking about what to do next after each task is complete.

One Step at a Time: During times of severe burnout, the temptation may be for you to think of trying to finish everything all at once, as soon as possible. On the contrary, doing so may actually slow you down on individual tasks. Once starting on a certain piece of work, focusing on only that task instead may prove much more useful. Blocking the constant thoughts about other remaining work can help reduce stress levels, minimize distractions, and improve your efficiency on the individual tasks.

GET OUT OF THE HOUSE: Simple, but effective. As long as you are in your comfy room, with your bed 4 feet away and Netflix only 3 clicks away, you will not get any work done. Sometimes, you just need to get out of the house and take a quick 5-minute walk! The U of T campus is gorgeous with numerous quaint cafes and places to sit. Go grab a coffee, tea, or boba, or just do a lap around the building, throw some snow in the air, and look for a squirrel to talk to. Going outside helps, try it.

Scheduled Fun: Include an hour or two of mandatory "doing nothing" in your weekly timetable. In that hour, plan a solo date like going on a hike, spending time at the ROM, trying out a new cafe, visiting a farmers market or just walking around the city! I like to do these things either on Wednesdays (for that midweek boost) or Fridays so I have something to look forward to. When you do a bit of work before the excursion, you really feel like you have earned the break: *"It's like a reward."*

Share a laugh: Sometimes, despite all the planning and organization, the stress can still persist deep down. As a result, you may feel depressed, and all the joy from even the simplest of tasks may feel removed. However, spending even a small amount of time talking with family or friends can drastically improve your mood and, ultimately, your morale. Recall that funny memory from ages ago because now may be about the right time to laugh about it! Accepting that the stress will remain, but keeping it at bay through laughter, can really have a positive impact.

Food, Water, Sleep: When experiencing burnout, taking care of yourself,

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cooking all your meals, sleeping on time, and drinking enough water can become difficult, but it is essential. A car without gas is nothing more than a hunk of metal, so drink your 8 glasses of water, eat your veggies, and sleep for 7 hours. That is it, that's the tip.

Finally, and circling back to the very beginning, YOU ARE NOT ALONE. There is a ton of support available. Talk to our lovely learning strategist, Meghan Littlejohn or the amazing Innis Librarian Kate Johnson. Get help from the Innis Writing Centre if you need to bounce essay ideas off of someone or require assistance re-working an assignment. Maybe even try reaching out to the super helpful Dons if you live on res. People are nice! Talk to them.

Think about it, you've made it this far! We hope our tips can help you pull yourself out of that pit of unproductivity. Best of luck!!! You are all going to crush it.

Op-Ed: Freedom Convoy 2022: What Actually Happened, and What We Can Learn

Kyle Newcombe
POLITICS

Looking back, it's honestly shocking that a humble group of truckers, who began a convoy on January 23rd, 2022 to protest vaccine mandates, turned into such a hot-button national issue that Canadian politics are still feeling the effects of it today. The protests were loud, sure, but the Canadian government went so far as to label the entire movement as far-right and even invoke the Emergencies Act in a severe overreaction to the protests.

Contrary to what many politicians and people here on campus seem to believe, the fight against vaccine mandates is not far-right. As university students, we live in a very liberal environment, and we need to be aware of that and recognize the validity of other people's political beliefs, even if they are in direct contradiction to our own. It's perfectly fine that the population at U of T is largely liberal, but we need to be aware of our biases and understand what other people are thinking and feeling.

As mentioned, the protests began small. Canadian truckers had one goal: to protest a federal vaccine mandate for truckers crossing the border. Many truckers understandably felt that this kind of government regulation, targeting a very specific class of people, was unwarranted this late into the pandemic. It's also worth understanding how the trucking industry works; generally, most truckers are self-employed contractors who own their own trucks. The federal legislation that requires unvaccinated truckers to quarantine for 14 days after returning to Canada was, therefore, essentially blocking them from working most of the time, affecting their livelihoods.

Once the truckers set out from Vancouver, they began journeying across the country to Ottawa and blockading Canadian-US border crossings. They arrived in Ottawa on January 28th amidst a firestorm of media attention. The truckers were loud, they made themselves known, and they were described by the Ottawa Citizen as "occupying" downtown Ottawa. Litigation began to make its way through the courts in order to allow Ottawa residents to resume their normal lives.

But that wasn't enough for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. From the start, he denounced the truckers as having "unacceptable views." On February 16th, he took it up a notch, calling the protestors "swastika wavers."

The truth of the matter is that there were far-right elements present at the trucker protests. That's what happens when any protest swells to that size; there are bound to be extremist elements present who attempt to co-opt it. There were Confederate flags spotted, and there were some less-than-tasteful alterations made to statues in Ottawa. But if you talk to anyone who was actually among the protesters, they will likely tell you that it was mostly peaceful and non-extremist. For example, journalist Rupa Subramanya said, "I have spoken to close to 100 protesters, truckers and other folks, and not one of them sounded like an insurrectionist, white supremacist, racist or misogynist."

As mentioned, Justin Trudeau wasn't having any of it. He continued to label the entire protest as extremist in order to justify enacting the Emergencies Act, granting him sweeping powers to end the protests which had become a disaster for him politically. Protesters were forcibly removed, Ottawa Police were emboldened in their actions, even going so far as to discourage journalists from documenting what was happening in downtown Ottawa, and bank accounts and financial assets owned by the protest organizers and their donors were frozen.

The predecessor to the Emergencies Act, the War Measures Act, had only been invoked three times in Canadian history: during World War I, World War II, and the FLQ crisis, a domestic terror event in Quebec during the 1960s. Considering that there was significant backlash to the use of the Emergencies Act during a *terrorism event*, opposition to Trudeau's use of it during the trucker protests is entirely warranted.

The use of the Emergencies Act during government opposition protests is alarming and an example of significant government overreach, which has taken place more than ever during the pandemic. Restricting movement, requiring vaccines for many normal activities, and mandating masks are just a few examples. It's not about whether these policies are right or wrong; it's about recognizing that the government exercised more power during the pandemic to regulate the lives of individu-

als, and still feels emboldened to do so.

It's important that we actually understand what government power-grabs mean from a human perspective, instead of just blindly supporting moves like this because they are targeting people with beliefs that we don't agree with. Even though there are people out there that have dissenting views, the government cannot go after them in such a targeted way. Everyone should be allowed to protest and express their ideas; in fact, Article Two in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression" and "freedom of peaceful assembly."

By the end of February, the trucker protests have wound down and the focus has shifted to other, frankly more important, global events. Trudeau did eventually revoke the Emergencies Act, but it took him ten days, which is frankly ten days too long. The truckers had already been cleared from Ottawa and were taking refuge at their aforementioned encampment in Arnprior, Ontario.

Looking back, there are some lessons to be learned. Namely, how did a protest over a small piece of government legislation turn into a global news event that pitted differing political ideologies against each other in such a confrontational way? There's a sound argument to be made here that this was in fact a fight over nothing. 90% of Canadian truckers were already vaccinated when this vaccine mandate was enacted, and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce called out the federal government saying they had provided no clear evidence that truckers were significant sources of COVID-19 spread, which was used as justification for the mandate. And even if you are vaccinated, CNBC reported in January that five months after your second dose of Moderna or Pfizer, the vaccines are only 10% effective at preventing infection (while still being more effective at preventing serious illness and death).

Knowing all of this, it has to be asked: what were we even fighting over? I'd argue not a whole lot; this was merely a political ideology war that started with an honest attempt to protest but was co-opted by a political class and the media in order to smear and delegitimize their opponents. All of the fanfare and focus on the extremist elements ultimately distracted from the original goal: a small group of unvaccinated truckers just wanted to be able to cross the border and do their job, which is more important than ever amidst tremendous supply chain uncertainty.

As we emerge from the pandemic, the ultimate test of politicians will not be how they support those who voted for them, but rather how they engage with those who disagree with them. In light of the tremendous challenges we continue to face as a country and as a species, it is more important than ever to find common ground and de-escalate conflict instead of fighting it with force. That's the lesson I hope we all can learn from not only the trucker protests but all of the political and social turmoil during the pandemic.

An Audit of Western Democracy

Catherine Dume
POLITICS

On January 6th, 2021, the whole world witnessed the United States of America, one of the Western world's oldest democracies, experience a "brush with death." In hopes of reclaiming Trump's presidency, Trump supporters stormed Capitol Hill under the conspiratorial belief that the Democrats "stole" the 2020 election through fraudulent means. For Trump supporters, this day was nothing more than a "civil protest" that was *upholding* the democratic right to fair elections. However, Democrats were horrified at the scene as the idea of maintaining power after losing an election *screams* authoritarianism. In order to save the US's fragile democracy, Biden has tried to pass two voting rights bills: the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Despite his intention, the question of whether the bills will "save" the United States' democracy has been asked, with many political scientists viewing it as a simple bandage to the problem. This leads us to wonder: is democracy inherently flawed? And if so, should other democratic countries like Canada be wary?

Before we can answer these questions, we need to understand what a democracy is. Etymologists trace the origin of democracy to the Ancient Greek word "dēmokratia" which can be broken down into "dēmos," meaning "people," and "kratos," meaning "rule." Under this political regime, it is the people who have the power, not the elites. It should be noted that back then, it was more of a "direct" democracy where the citizens of a city-state would represent themselves. However, today's democracy is a representative democracy where a large population is represented by an elected official. Over the course of centuries, the idea of democracy has been associated with liberty and fair elections, which become the main pillars of the institution. It is the ideas of liberty, individualism, and equality that tend to idealize democracy as the ultimate form of society. But what about the Cold War? Hasn't this allowed democracy to have risen above its counterpart, communism, in terms of world domination? According to Dr. Robert D. Kaplan, "The rise and decline of communism says nothing about the long-term viability of western democracy." In fact, he goes on to explain that democracy, which is usually associated with "good ideals," is actually value neutral, allowing leaders of all kinds of morals to achieve power as long as they gain the support of the people. When Germany experienced economic failure from losing

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WWI, Hitler capitalized on the people's desires of returning to Germany's glory days before the war to ensure his seat in power.

Is this not the case with the Trump experience? Throughout the 2016 US presidential election, he promised to "Make America Great Again," a return to the old "glory days." He managed to secure his time in office. However, he was not able to keep it. His attempt to stay in power on January 6th is frightening, as it shows that no matter how we view democracy, there will always be the risk of individuals who get elected to power and seek to keep that power in true authoritarian fashion, easily killing democracy in one fell swoop. In the end, democracy is a neutral regime that is as good as its leader, which depends on the people's opinions of electing a good leader for its success.

Is Democracy then a faulted system? Is it doomed to fail? Are we seconds away from its dissolving? The second United States president, John Adams, would like to think so, stating, "Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts, and murders itself. There never was a democracy yet that did not commit suicide." However, I'm more optimistic.

I mentioned before that democracy is as good as its leaders, but that isn't exactly fair, as it is actually the electoral system that determines the strength of our democracy. How we design our electoral system depends on how we interpret the concept of responsible government. According to *The Canadian Regime*, a responsible government is tied to the idea of a division of powers; it ensures that there is no individual who can abuse their power, which basically protects the idea of democracy. Thus, a responsible government, through dividing the power of a monarch into several bodies, creates checks and balances to avoid abuses of power and ensure that the needs of the people are served.

Both Canada and the United States practice this concept by creating three branches of government: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial. However, they interpret 'responsible government' differently. In the United States, each branch of government essentially acts on its own. As *The Canadian Regime* states, "They do not need to rely on the *confidence* of [other branches] for legitimacy." This is why a US president can pass laws without the approval of Congress, which is significant as Congress represents the people. In contrast, each branch of the Canadian government, especially the executive Prime Minister, must *maintain* the confidence of the House of Commons, which represents the interests of the public. If the Prime Minister loses the confidence of the House of Commons by attempting to govern without their support, the Prime Minister must resign, and a new election be called. In recent years, the Prime Minister's power has grown significantly, but it is the checks and balances enforced by upholding the confidence of the House of Commons that prevent a Prime Minister from grabbing all the power for himself.

In addition to this distinction of the interpretation of responsible government, the number of political parties each country has seems to play a part in how strong their democracy is. According to Lee Drutman's feature article, "Why The Two-Party System Is Effing Up U.S. Democracy," he states, "Ultimately, the more binary the party system, the stronger the out-party hatred." This polarized hatred of Us vs Them isn't unique to politics in the United States, as the US seems to be polarized on every topic from race to religion. But when it comes to the Republicans versus the Democrats, this hatred prevents the parties from working together to benefit the country as a whole. It encourages people who are loyal to one party over another to be unwilling to concede, even if their party legitimately lost. However, other democracies like Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia all have a multi-party system. While it may not prevent certain parties from going neck and neck in electoral races—like the Liberal and Conservative parties in Canada—according to recent studies, it has reduced polarization to some degree.

So, is Canada's democracy stronger than the United States? *The Economist* Intelligence Unit's Democracy 2020 Index seems to think so, as Canada rose to 5th place as a "full democracy" during the pandemic, while the US has fallen into a "flawed democracy." The index identifies the reason for this descent as "extremely low levels of trust in institutions, increasing threats to freedom of expression, and a degree of societal polarisation that makes consensus almost impossible to achieve." Now, the United States isn't the only country that has fallen into the "flawed democracy" category. The index identifies that both France and Portugal have backtracked in terms of civil liberties due to the pandemic lockdowns. That isn't to say that we Canadians haven't experienced our fair share of issues within the pandemic, but the report raises important observations that cannot be ignored.

This leads us to today and Biden's new voting rights bills. The Freedom to Vote Act seems to be addressing the issue of voter suppression. According to an article by *Indivisible*—an American grassroots movement that focuses on upholding democracy—they explain that voter suppression can have negative implications for democracy, as it reduces the power of the people in favour of certain white rich elites and not allowing minorities to participate in elections. As for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, Congress states that the bill will ensure that states and political subdivisions must receive clearance before making changes to voting practices. While these new bills show promise of improvement regarding voter suppression, they do not address the structural problem the United States' democracy is facing at the moment. With the Republican GOP's blocking of the bills, it demonstrates that Biden's first Presidential speech of unity hasn't been practically implemented since he entered office. Perhaps at the end of his presidency we might see improvement, but as long as the United States' structure remains the same, its democracy will be at risk of collapsing.

Misogyny in Western Science

Olivia Fraser
POLITICS

Last summer, my best friend Sarah began to experience intense pain in her upper jaw and mouth area. She went to a doctor immediately and was told it *must* be her wisdom teeth. They sent her to the surgeon the following Monday, scheduling her wisdom teeth removal and giving her muscle relaxants in the meantime. Two days later, the same pain was still unbearable. She went back to the practitioner "begging for some sort of relief," taking the form of antibiotics. On that Saturday, still in pain, she took matters into her own hands and called an emergency dental clinic, who performed an emergency root canal because of a misdiagnosed accessed tooth. Once she returned to her regular dentist to check her root canal, they were confused and dismissed her pain even after the emergency dental clinic's procedure. When asked about this experience, Sarah distressingly explained, "I didn't go back [to my regular dentist] after that ... I really don't want to. Just the thought of walking in that building makes me upset." Furthermore, on multiple occasions in past years, she went to the doctor to address her unmanageable menstrual pain, only to be told to just take some ibuprofen and, essentially, get over it.

The University of Toronto (2022) published a research report, finding that female patients are more likely to experience complications, and even die, when operated on by a male surgeon. Extensive studies in Ontario reveal that 15% of women were "more likely to experience a bad outcome if their surgeon was a man." Additionally, research showed a 32% chance of women dying 30 days after a procedure executed by a male surgeon. Researchers in the article suggest that a major contributor to this problem is a lack of communication between male surgeons and female patients and perhaps a lack of trust.

This is not necessarily a case of men hating women or caring less about women's health. It is more a lack of research regarding women's health which stems from a misogynistic medical history and leads to endless sexism in the medical field. The individual male surgeon is not to blame but rather the culture of Western medicine and science and its sexist foundation.

In her 2018 article entitled "The Philosophical Roots of Western Misogyny," Christia Mercer writes about the philosophical foundation of gendered science. Most prominent is Aristotle's notion of women as mutilated men due to their cold, passive bodies, thus "her natural mutilation makes her contribution to human flourishing dramatically inferior to a man's." Moreover, Aristotle's perspective on female bodies as being mutilated branches beyond the body and into the moral, mental space of women as Aristotle expresses that "[i]t is their cold and heavier blood that lead [women] to be less able to be courageous, independent, and intelligent."

The philosophical beginnings of women's inferiority served as a strong basis for Western science emerging in the Middle Ages. According to Grewal and Kaplan (2002), Western science flourished with the dismissal of "traditional" knowledge, such as Chinese or Indigenous practices, as illegitimate and outdated. Thus, women's vital roles within non-Western knowledge were ignored and devalued. Before Western science solidified itself as truth once capitalism was born, Aristotle and other philosophers' theories about women's bodies were believed and relied upon, deeming women slightly inferior to men. Once Western science became truth, the discrepancy between male and female bodies grew. Men were then decidedly incredibly superior to women, marginalizing women in a society controlled by men, because science said so.

The medical world, built from a patriarchal and misogynistic society, knows frighteningly little about the female body. Featured in *The Guardian*, Gabrielle Jackson (2019) in her article "The female problem: how male bias in medical trials ruined women's health" interviews Dr. Kate Young who explains how the healthcare system was made by men, for men, leaving women naturally excluded from medical knowledge and research. Instead of acknowledging the gaps in medical research, female patients are usually disregarded, assumed hysterical, and are expected to "take control (with their minds) of their disease (in their body) by accepting their illness, making 'lifestyle' changes and conforming to their gendered social roles of wife and mother," says Dr. Young. Along the same lines, Angelina Saina (2021) writes: "The bigger problem is the cultural presumption that women are exaggerating or being overly emotional about their pain ... this suggests that diversity or data are not the only issues, but that the sexist assumptions shared by societies at large are also to blame. Women are being lumped together and labelled as untrustworthy patients." Furthermore, in another article by Jackson (2019) entitled "Why don't doctors trust women? Because they don't know much about us," she writes how women wait longer for pain medication and cancer diagnosis than men, while largely being misdiagnosed and dismissed.

While the lack of proper, trustworthy communication between surgeons and patients does create a divide and perpetuates sexist assumptions, women dying from being operated on by male surgeons points to bigger gaps and flaws in the healthcare system and culture at large. Women's bodies are under-researched, undervalued, and are still viewed as inferior to male bodies, resulting in the science surrounding women's bodies and brains to be rooted more in culture and assumptions than in objective science.

The Metaverse, with Eyes of Flame

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SCIENCE & TECH

On October 28th, 2021, Mark Zuckerberg announced that the parent company Facebook was changing its name to "Meta," a company that would make "the metaverse." The public's response was one of general confusion. What even is the metaverse? Viewers of the accompanying video could be forgiven for being underwhelmed. Why was Facebook rebranding over *this*?

The term 'metaverse' derives from Neal Stephenson's 1992 novel *Snow Crash*, in which the metaverse is a virtual reality successor to the internet that allows users to escape a dystopian reality. Though few share their view, proponents claim that the metaverse will be like *Ready Player One*, an immersive virtual reality where one can work, play, and truly *own* things independent of platforms. In the intervening time since the announcement, corporate media have isolated a single key fact about the metaverse: at this point, we have no clue what it will look like.

Why has Facebook invested this much energy and capital in the metaverse—to the point of changing its name to Meta—when the technology is so speculative? In the fourth quarter of 2021, Facebook's average number of daily active users declined for the first time in its seventeen year history. Shocked investors dumped stock, leading to a twenty percent decrease in the company's stock price. Meta, of course, has access to active user data internally before that data is released to shareholders in quarterly reports. Zuckerberg's announcement came in the middle of the quarter, likely when it became clear internally that average user numbers would not recover. Meta has long known that Facebook's user growth was declining and may have accelerated pre-existing plans for rebranding in an attempt to mitigate stock price losses.

Glimpses into the metaverse offered to journalists underscore the project's nascency. The *Financial Times* interviewed Nick Clegg, an ex-UK politician turned Facebook executive, in the metaverse in December 2021. The first words Clegg said were, "Can we get the sneering and mockery out of the way?" Unfortunately for Clegg, Meta has invested too much to back out now. Starting a major project and then publicly abandoning it is a recipe to tank one's own stock price, something they would like to avoid doing a second time. The other options available are either to attempt to build the metaverse or to quietly scrap the project and hope no one notices. Currently, the metaverse is little more than a videoconferencing software for out-of-touch elites like Clegg, but it promises to be something like a massive, immersive video game. If Meta does try to build this virtual world, they're going to encounter a problem: building virtual worlds is *hard*.

On November 14th, 2018, game studio Bethesda released "Fallout 76." "76" was the first online iteration of *Fallout*, a series which began in the 1990s as an offline role-playing game and evolved under Bethesda into a single-player first-person shooter. The release was not a success. The game's major problem was that it was buggy: the larger the virtual world, the more opportunities for things to go wrong. And the world of "76" was colossal.

Bugs in "Fallout 76" created exploits, including the ability to steal from the inventory of other players; access to a virtual room containing copies of every item in the game; and unlimited in-game currency. As of writing, Bethesda developers are unable to find or remedy common exploits.

Worryingly, the Metaverse is supposed to exist at a scale that can accommodate billions of users—what happens when there is an exploit? Meta *cannot* give a serious answer to this question, because the metaverse is not a technology proposal, it's a grift.

This is why the metaverse is vague—if you can't understand the metaverse, you can't criticize it. Silicon Valley investors are notorious for investing in speculative technologies that either fail spectacularly, like Theranos and WeWork, or bankrupt themselves in desperate obscurity. It's surprising that Meta's announcement didn't encourage a spate of hedge fund investment.

If Meta chooses to go through with building the metaverse, it will be rolled out piecemeal; major bugs risk expensive lawsuits. Competitors like Epic Games, Google, and Microsoft, which have announced multibillion dollar metaverse plans, will simultaneously construct their own metaverses. Perhaps it was a mistake to have thought there would be just one metaverse. Instead, we may see a number of different platforms of varying quality and interoperability. The metaverse, promised as a successor to the current internet, is likely to replicate its structure, along with that structure's problems.

In the current platform ecosystem, platforms make money by commodifying personal data and selling it to third parties. While metaverse companies may profit from in-app purchases, the metaverse will give companies unprecedented access to biometric data like heart rate and facial expressions. This raises significant privacy concerns, but it also raises questions about the metaverse's universality. Facebook already encounters problems in European Union privacy regulations, and California may replicate those regulations. If the metaverse is invasive, it runs the risk of being unable to operate in these areas, which together are more than a fifth of the global economy. Because the value of the metaverse for an individual depends on the number of other users, excluding large markets poses a significant challenge to the technology's potential for profit.

It's difficult, moreover, to see a workplace of doll-like avatars being competitive with Zoom in the videoconferencing market, and, given the lukewarm public reaction to Zuckerberg's announcement, it's unlikely to seriously compete with *touching grass*. If the metaverse succeeds, it will be a result of the antidemocratic control over our lives tech companies already possess, not any positive feature of the technology itself.

It's no small wonder that the technology sector has learned to mimic innovation in form but not content, creating announcements that appear to make sense while simultaneously lacking any substance that could be considered meaningful. The obscurantism of cryptocurrency, the stupidity of Teslas in tunnels, and now the utter vacuity of the metaverse. The comprehensive designers are perhaps our generation's most adept nonsense poets.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The metaverse, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

Unlike the *Jabberwocky*, Mark Zuckerberg's poetry is neither whimsical nor enjoyable—it's insidious. One comes away from it not chuckling, but confused and concerned that one's workplace will be converted into a dollhouse for uncanny, emotionless avatars. "The metaverse" is a nonsense word. With luck, it will never mean anything.

The Comforts Of Prophecy: Why We Find Ease In The End Of The World

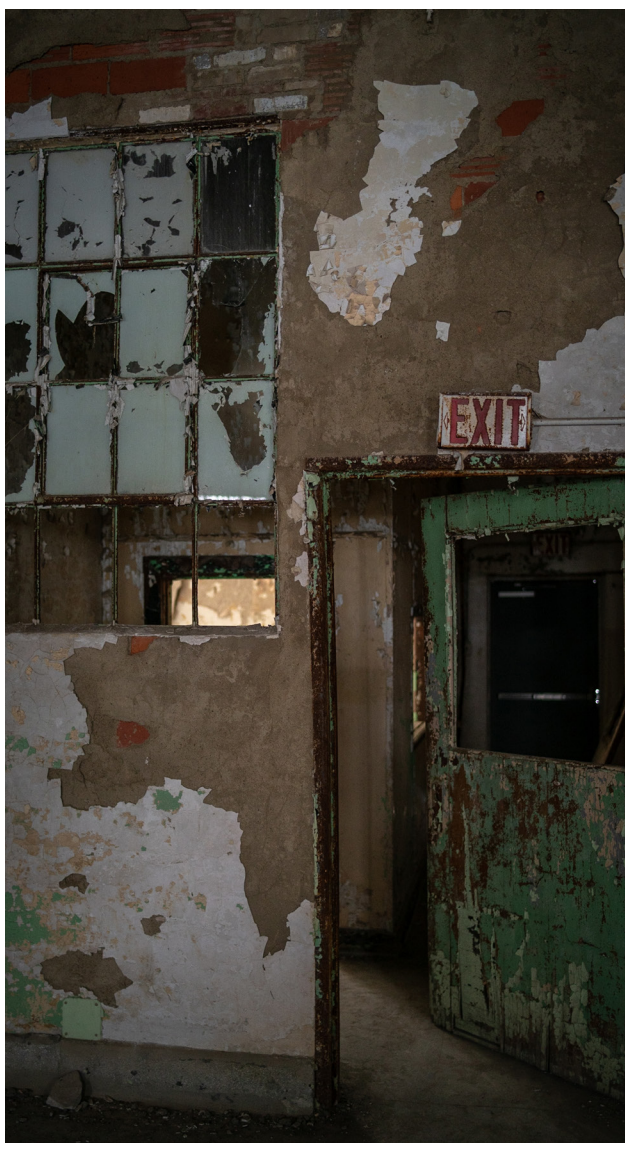
Ashley Vadivelu
SCIENCE & TECH

Fatal disease outbreaks, invasions of otherworldly beings, and catastrophic asteroids are all unimaginably devastating. So why exactly are we so interested in the idea of the end of the world? Through countless doomsday predictions, post-apocalyptic movies, and the mere idea that we live on a floating rock, people find a sense of comfort in not being able to outrun the end.

Lifting the Burden of Individual Responsibility

We dedicate our entire lives to working. We invest hundreds of thousands of dollars into our education and spend decades training our bodies and minds to perform at maximum efficiency. Our entire existence is built on being in control, but a doomsday would dissolve that burden.

While that sense of control is liberating, the feeling also adds an immense pressure of individual responsibility. As complex creatures with complex goals, we have created a world with hierarchies wherein everyone has a place. These responsibilities range from pursuing a fulfilling career to changing lives and bettering the world. With every lecture attended, assignment turned in, and connection made, we—as university students—are creating and accomplishing these economic and social goals daily. Naturally, the pressure to fulfill these responsibilities is daunting, as we essentially compete for a place in society which, like our lifespans, is limited.



With the looming possibility of an apocalypse, these responsibilities get thrown out the window. Good grades and Instagram followers are pointless in a world where your only goal is to survive. An apocalypse would set our society back to a time when one's individual responsibilities extended only as far as staying warm, nourished, and safe. Thus, comfort can be found in a natural end by lifting the burden of individual responsibility. With such an uncontrollable event, our priorities would shift, and the pressure of becoming a functioning member of society would dissipate.

Finding a Purpose

In keeping with the theme of responsibility, an apocalypse would also give people purpose. Instead of deciding what colour to paint your bedroom or whether to walk or take the bus, you would be put in a world where you were one decision away from death. By making these life or death decisions, each person exercises a unique role and plays an active part in restoring order in the world. A few common associations with the thought of an apocalypse include hideouts filled with non-perishable food, gas masks and protective clothing, and eventually, self-sustaining technology and energy production. Every creative solution is rewarded with another day of life. Boy scout skills would finally come in handy.

Demonstrating the discovery of purpose is the 2021 film *Don't Look Up*. The film follows the account of two astronomers who attempt to warn mankind of an incoming comet that would destroy Earth. While the original goal of the film was to shed light on the growing impact of climate change and the ignorance of major political figures, the same principles can be applied to any major issue. In a doomsday scenario, the two scientists use their acumen and expertise to attempt to save the world, bestowing upon them a newfound purpose.

Romanticizing the Post-Apocalypse

While the apocalypse is the keynote speaker of the new world, we must also consider highly romanticized post-apocalyptic settings. After humanity is wiped out, leaving just a few survivors if any, Earth may have a chance at returning to its natural state, which acts as the light at the end of the tunnel. We saw a reset happen during the first wave of COVID-19 in mid-2020. Fewer animals died at the hands of reckless drivers and fewer ships crowded the ocean's surface. Many say nature hit the reset button, as flocks of flamingos were once again able to enjoy the Nartan Lagoon in Albania, and there was a 34% decrease in suspended pollution in Kerala's Vembanad Lake. The restoration of our organic world resonates with many people, but is a process many attempt to achieve whereas a natural disaster that wipes out the problem would be much more efficient.

It's a Scary World

The final reason for our odd sense of comfort in disaster is quite simple: life is scary. We know so little about the rock called Earth that we live on, and though we are constantly learning more, there will always be things we just cannot explain. Planning for an apocalypse is like writing tomorrow's to-do list. Starting the day with an agenda provides guidance and direction, goals to accomplish, and a medium to keep thoughts organized.

In the same manner, doomsday prepping can make a person feel more prepared for the unknown. Preparation may provide some guidance on how to deal with a catastrophe, or may just occupy the mind for a bit longer. The end of the world is just another phenomenon that we believe in to create purpose in our long and mundane lives. With the possibility of a doomsday, nothing really matters—a cynical, yet strangely comforting, thought. The comedy/horror Youtube series Don't Hug Me I'm Scared said it best: "the past is far behind us, the future doesn't exist."

Greenwood Launches Second Publication, *Situational Inverse: Overturning Traditions*

Jessica Velacso
STUDENT LIFE

Image courtesy: Tooba Ijaz, DO NOT TRAVEL*, 2021. Photobook, 8x8"*

Greenwood—a student-run curatorial initiative based at University of Toronto Mississauga and supported by The Blackwood—is set to launch their second publication, *Situational Inverse: Overturning Traditions,* on March 25th. With Greenwood's mandate of amplifying the voices of emerging to mid-career creatives of all kinds, this publication showcases the work of nine contributors: Blaire Mackenzie, Dania Sabri, Masha Le Do, Sofia Sue-Wah Sing, Sofia Suleman, Tooba Ijaz, Tyler Young, and collaborative duo Chi Liu and Josephine Tianyi. Focusing on the themes of leadership, power, and positionality, the Greenwood team has a goal to subvert traditional methods of understanding these concepts through open dialogue, with this publication acting as a conversational catalyst.

Playing and re-contextualizing conventional modes of communicating or engaging with power (i.e. voting systems and knowledge sharing), Greenwood highlights the ways in which power manifests in different aspects of everyday life. From political power to familial power to self power, how can power fluctuate? How do we collectively engage with power in the present? How can we change this treatment in the future?

Situational Inverse: Overturning Traditions is a free publication supported by The Blackwood at University of Toronto Mississauga. A PDF copy is available to view through Greenwood's website, with limited printed copies available in archives held by The Blackwood in Mississauga and Hauser & Wirth in New York.

For more information on Greenwood and their programming please visit their Instagram, Facebook, or website.

Tooba Ijaz is a Pakistani-Canadian artist and photographer exploring world issues and city life through sculpture and photography, respectively. Ijaz is currently a fourth year student at the University of Toronto, Mississauga campus, specializing in Art & Art History with a minor in History of Religions, and a Certificate of Curatorial Studies. Ijaz is also completing her Advanced Diploma in Art & Art History at Sheridan College, where she receives hands-on practice by working in sculpture and photo facilities.

Around The World in 18 Songs

IRC International-Committee & Yash Kumar Singhal
PLAYLIST

At this point, it's become meme status how massive the University of Toronto's student body is. Although the HUGE class sizes and long lines at every cafeteria on campus can sometimes become annoying, the large student body brings about note-worthy diversity. Our diversity exists in ideas, subjects, interests... and nationalities. U of T has students coming in from all around the world, 164 countries to be exact, of which a mere 20 have English as their native language.

Recent years have seen an influx of foreign music into the North American markets. Genres such as Kpop, Jpop, French Rap, and Spanish tunes have all made it onto our Spotify playlist at some point, proving just how universal the language of music can be. Our goal, through a carefully curated playlist, is to shed light on the beauty of multilingual music, in honour of International Mother Language Day!

With the help of all you Innis students, we have curated 18 songs with lyrics in languages from French and Spanish to Turkish and Thai! The playlist is a mish-mash of themes and genres so that every song brings something different to our international jam session. My personal favourite has to be 'Senorita' from the Bollywood movie Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara. This Spanish-Hindi musical duet has the singers' voices alternating back and forth singing to each other about love and life in their own native languages. Everyone else dances along, somehow knowing what they are trying to say, without understanding a single word.

It's the perfect playlist to listen to when you are cramming lecture notes the night before that big midterm, when getting ready to go out into the chilly weather for that evening jog, in the middle of that unbeatable video game boss battle, or any other time you need to get yourself pumped up. The songs are so poppy, catchy, and energizing that even if you do not understand any of the lyrics, I guarantee you will find yourself tapping your feet and bopping your head!

PLAYLIST ON NEXT PAGE

1. ICHIDAIJI — POLKADOT STINGRAY *(Japanese)*

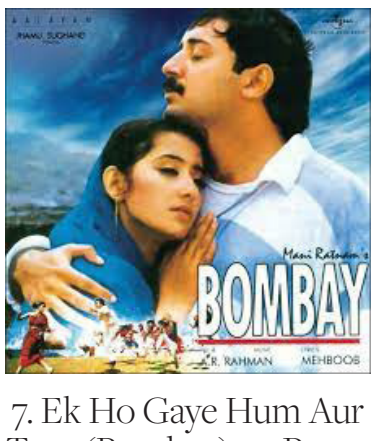
2. Mad Heads *(Ukrainian)*

3. Dommage — Bigflo et Oli *(French)*

4. Let's Fight — Ekin Cheng *(Cantonese)*

5. Nuestra Canción — Monsieur Periné, Vincente Garcia *(Spanish)*

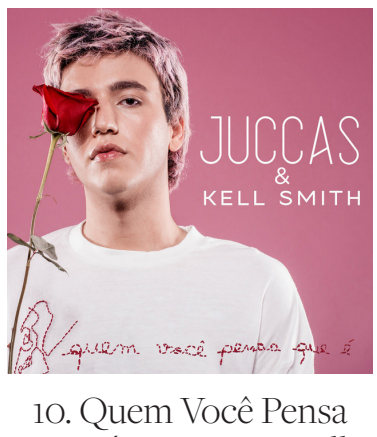
6. Bazen — Ezhel, Emel *(Turkish)*



7. Ek Ho Gaye Hum Aur Tum (Bombay) — Remo Fernandes *(Hindi)*

8. Der letzte Tanz — Bosse *(German)*

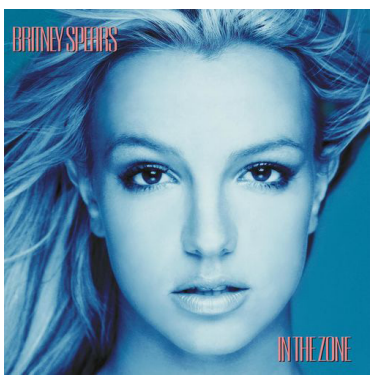
9. LIAR LIAR — Oh My Girl *(Korean)*



10. Quem Você Pensa Que é? — Juccas, Kell Smith *(Portuguese)*

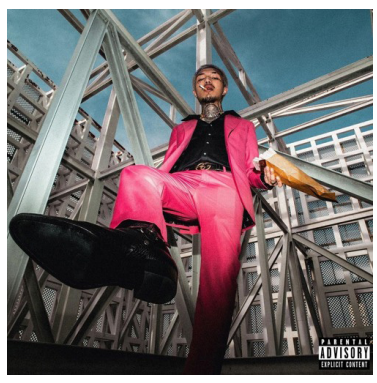
11. Autogram — Ceca *(Croatian)*

12. Senorita — from Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara *(Hindi/Spanish)*



13. Toxic — Britney Spears *(English)*

14. Dragostea Din Tei — O-Zone *(Romanian)*



15. YOUNGOHM *(Thai)*

Taking pictures of snails

Mackenzie Da Silva
CREATIVE

with you

feels right when my city,
the one I ask if you'll call your own,
(you know the streets better than I),
is dark, but not dead,
because the sky shoots shiny
tears down at us.
They drip off the snails,
our shoulders,
your eyelashes,
and onto the wood.
The wood doesn't decay
and I feel less rotten.

I never understood modern art,
but you can talk endlessly
about architecture.

16. Dil Le Gayee — Jasbir Jassi *(Punjabi)*

17. Occhi Lucidi — Leon Faun, Duffy *(Italian)*

18. MORE — K/DA *(English/Korean/Mandarin)*

Arranged Marriages: Tales of a Trapped Indian Bride

Jessica Khorana
ARTS AND CULTURE

Lately, many shows have been making light of—and in some cases, glorifying—the tradition of arranged marriages that is heavily entrenched in South Asian culture (I'm looking at you *Indian Matchmaking*). But what they play off for laughs is actually a pretty accurate depiction of what still goes on in India, as well as in some Indian families here in North America. In fact, according to a 2018 survey, approximately 93% of marriages in India are still arranged.

While it may seem useful to have what is essentially a free dating service—run by individuals who supposedly know you the best—the whole process is very transactional and doesn't allow for any of the fairytale-type romance depicted in most Bollywood movies. The role of the individuals to-be-wed in the process is actually quite minimal, with the parents of the prospective bride or groom first identifying suitable candidates based on age, career, wealth, family background, and often, caste. Then, the list of candidates is narrowed down to one suitor, and the parents of both parties discuss the possible match. The individuals themselves are then allowed to meet one another in the presence of their respective families (which, to be honest, does nothing to diffuse the awkwardness), or in certain cases, a respectable chaperone. From that point on, there may be a few follow-up meetings before the individuals are required to make a decision about whether they want to pursue a marriage. Sometimes, they aren't given a choice. Quite often, individuals may be pressured into an arranged marriage in order to fulfill their parents' desire to have grandchildren, to improve their family's social standing with a good match, or simply because it is expected in our culture.

April 7th, 2001. The bride (21 years old) and groom (28 years old) on their wedding day.

I know that right now I'm, depressing all of you, shattering your dreamy-eyed expectations of an elaborate seven-day Indian wedding—which do happen by the way, complete with various ceremonies, expensive outfits, piles of food that make you feel like you're about to burst, and an endless number of relatives that you have never seen before in your life. Some of you may even attempt to quote statistics to me—and yes, I am aware that a study conducted in 2012 found that the divorce rate of arranged marriages is less than 4%. However, you have to consider that most arranged marriages occur in India, a country where access to divorce is limited (yes, even in 2022), and for a long time, it was considered to be (and in some areas, it still is) very "taboo." These restrictions often render divorce as not a *real* option.

Furthermore, the practice of arranging marriages is deeply rooted in misogyny and prejudice. Drawing on the experiences of the women in my family, a significant portion of the prospective grooms often expect their future wives to be docile and agreeable, maintain the household, raise the children, and in some cases—quite disturbingly—act similar to their mothers. In the past, the-bride-to-be may not have even been allowed to work after getting married, depending on the groom and the societal expectations of the particular region in India. As well, marrying outside of the faith or outside of one's caste is *still* frowned upon in this day and age. Even my grandfather, possibly the sweetest man I have ever met, "wouldn't have hesitated to disown me [my mother] if I had decided to pursue a love match with a man outside of my caste."

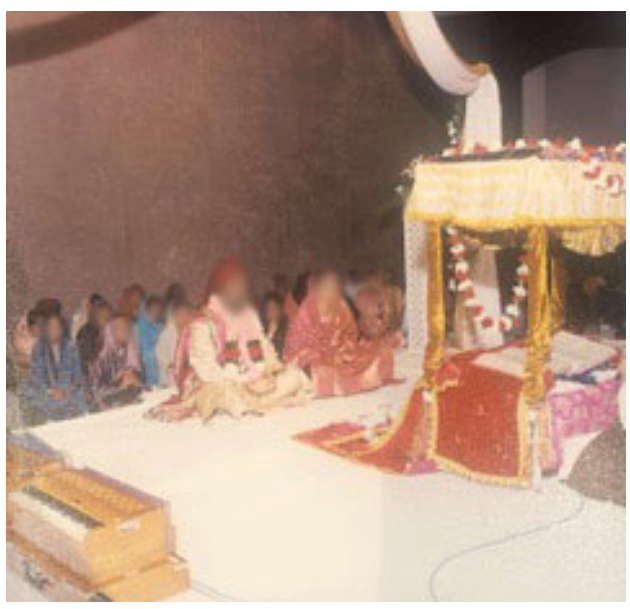
In addition to the inherent toxicity of the practice it used to be quite common for matches to be arranged when either one or *both* of the individuals were fresh out of adolescence, and it still occurs in certain parts of India today. My own mother was only a year older than I am now when her parents pushed her into marrying my father, a man who was not only seven years older than her but also virtually a stranger. A year later, she ended up having me and had to navigate raising a child whilst only *just* having entered adulthood herself, all the while learning to coexist with the stranger she had just tied herself to and living in a new country where she knew absolutely no one.

"My parents planted the idea of an arranged marriage in my head early in life," she told me. "It was never up for discussion, it was always a guarantee—an expectation." At eighteen years old, about to enter university and having absolutely no experience in dating due to her parents' strict rules, it was a surprise when they suddenly sprung the match on her. "My mother informed me about him [my father] prior to meeting him and his parents. He was the only one that I know of that my parents were considering for my arranged marriage."

While her mother was more open-minded about the topic of marriage, her father was not. He insisted that my mother marry this man that she didn't really know much about, aside from the few facts that he cared about (i.e. good job, good family, and of marrying age). As she described to me, "I met with your father and his family only twice—about an hour long each time—before I was required to make a decision about our arrangement. It didn't really give us enough time to get to know one another."

As I am sure that many of you could not fathom being married at such a young age (especially when considering that some of us can't even take care of ourselves beyond microwaving instant ramen and consuming copious amounts of caffeine), neither could she. "I had a different plan [than getting married so young]—I wanted to attend university and have a job before I got married. I didn't anticipate getting married before turning 23...I never planned on having children so young."

When asked about how she felt after 21 years of marriage and whether she held any regrets, her response was quite emotional, "I wholly regret following my parents' decision...maybe because I never had the chance to explore dating, not just because of my parents but because I was scared of ending up with the wrong person



April 7th, 2001. The Anand Karaj *ceremony, during which a prayer is spoken for success of the marraige, while the Raggis (religious musicians) perform Hymns to embody God's blessings.*

and making mistakes, I really regret listening to my parents instead of trying to marry for love. The one thing that I don't regret, is that I am no longer the passive girl who allowed herself to be pushed into marrying some random stranger. I'm a stronger, more independent person who has accomplished so much, even if it's not what I originally planned."

While I am in no way intending to spit on centuries of South Asian history and tradition, nor am I attempting to perpetrate the commonly held Western ideal that women in Eastern cultures "need saving," I do want to stress the great need we have to eradicate the practice of arranged marriages. While most of you have never given a second thought to getting married besides your dream wedding Pinterest board or your perfect spouse, I live in fear of the day that my mother's past becomes my future.

The Other 'Once Upon a Times': A History of Beginnings

Celine Sleiman
ARTS AND CULTURE

Whether it makes you think of Disney movies or bedtime stories, there is no call for a child's attention quite as effective as "Once upon a time..."

Its vagueness ensures surprise; its familiarity promises comfort. But before the saying became a herald for happy endings, it was the opening line for English poets and bards—a mark of the oral storytelling tradition. The earliest use of the phrase dates back to at least 1380, having been documented in the Middle English romance Sir Ferumbras; however, its oral history likely precedes this poem. In the centuries that followed, the idiom would be adopted by novelists like Dickens, who began *A Christmas Carol* with, "Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house."

Yet, it was not just the English who began their stories this way. French writer Charles Perrault, the father of fairy tales, began classics like *Cendrillon* (*Cinderella*), and *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* (*Little Red Riding Hood*) with "Il était une fois..." (once upon a time). A similar translation can be seen in Hans Christian Anderson's "der var engang," meaning "there was once," and the Grimm Brothers' "es war einmal," meaning, "it was once."

And the similarities are not confined to just Europe. The study of literature across cultures reveals unmistakable parallels in the narration of fables and fairytales: a formula of vague places, unnamed times, and promises of magic. So, what are the other 'Once upon a times' and how do they compare?

In the Tamil language, bedtime stories usually begin, "In that only place..." Whereas in Telugu the narrator will first lament, "Having been said and said and said..." The former touches on the singular power of fiction, while the latter invokes a storytelling lineage; yet the distinction proves how an opening might frame the mind of its audience. In parts of the Caribbean, oral stories begin with an engagement between the storyteller and their listeners; the narrator will call in Creole, "E dit kwik?" (I say creek), to which the audience will reply "kwak" (crack).

African folktales have a long-standing tradition of formulaic openings. In the Hausa language, stories begin with the call: "A story, a story. Let it come, let it go." In Yoruba, it is more of a declaration: "Here is a story! Story it is." Like 'Once upon a time,' these openings frame the experience of fiction by distancing the audience from reality; but unlike the classic English expression, they also seek to teach. The reader or the listener is not only being placed in the world of the storyteller, they are being taught something about the very nature of stories—about sharing them, carrying traditions through them, and remembering that they are, by nature, untrue.

This undercurrent of instruction is made explicit in the Chilean opening: "Listen to tell it and tell it to teach it." It is not as playful as its African counterparts, nor as soft as its English equivalent; yet it tells us something about the intentions of the storyteller, colouring the narrative with an earnest sincerity. Other cultures have taken more humorous approaches, luring the audience in through absurdities. In Catalan a story may begin: "In a corner of the world where everybody had a nose..." and in Korea: "Once, in the old days, when tigers smoked..." The random images encourage laughter, while subtly disconnecting the listener from a world where sensibility is key.

The Polish fairy tale tradition, though not as comedic, also uses imagery as a device of disconnect: "Beyond seven mountains, beyond seven forests..." It is near-identical to the opening in certain Indian stories, which begin, "Beyond seven rivers, beyond seven seas." The audience is immediately swept away from their contemporary present into a vague wilderness, mirroring the spirit of unknown 'time' in 'Once upon a time. ' A lack of clarity seems to be a prominent feature of these openings, but none are so deliberately obscure as the traditional Arabic: "There was and there was not," which has similar translations in Farsi, Maltese and Romani.

On the strange similarities between storytelling traditions, Dr Lucia Sorbera — head of the department of Arabic language and culture at the University of Sydney— explained: "Borders are a very recent invention historically. From the 12th to 16th centuries, there was a particularly rich exchange between Asia, North Africa, Europe and the Middle East... This allowed the circulation of knowledge and language."

If the fairytales that have shaped the mythos of humanity are products of a cross-cultural phenomenon, of a social transmission, then the children who now listen to them ought to know that there is more than one way to begin a great story. The 'Once upon a times' of childhood may always hold sentiment to those who listened to them, but perhaps the key to realizing the full potential of storytelling is to become immersed in its diversity.

This Just In: Books Are Trendy Again

Stephanie Lee
ARTS AND CULTURE

With the COVID-19 restrictions, the bookstore became one of my favourite spots during the 2021 summer. I mean, when everything is closed down, I might as well be surrounded by the smell of fresh, new books with cool air conditioning, right? Not to mention that I am also from a suburb where there aren't any interesting places for a university student to roam around.

Just like that, my 2021 summer was all about going on a solo drive to a bookstore and roaming through tiny alleyways made up of bookshelves. After pressing play on a summer indie playlist that I curated, I let my AirPods block all the external noises and focus on my own world inside of a tiny bookstore. While the vintage-sounding guitar chirps on my ears, I roam through each shelf and grab a book that catches my attention. And then, I become the judge of my very own book show to critique the book's cover design, title, and writing style. Until I find the *perfect* book that satisfies my picky standards, the hunt continues on to the next shelf.

The feeling I get when I find the *perfect* book is inexplicable. The thrill of discovering a book that has a captivating introduction *and* a pretty cover is unmatched by any other emotion. It's the very moment when the several hours of book-hunting become worth it.

After a series of bookstore visits, I came to the conclusion that the enjoyment of selecting a book—the process of roaming around the store to discover a perfect book—is a fulfilling and rewarding experience. Although the book's content itself can provide many insights and emotions, there is more about the process of finding a book that you want to read. Spending several hours scavenging allows you to find a set of books that satisfies your own unique taste and standards; the books become yours before you even start reading them.

Perhaps this appreciation for the book-hunting process is why I had a major culture shock when I visited a bookstore with my best friend. As soon as we entered the store, I found her browsing through the TikTok app to find a list of famous BookTokers: "This book by Colleen Hoover... Madeline Miller... will captivate your mind if you are a rom-com, dark academia enthusiast." From one overly exaggerated voice to another, I would repeatedly hear influencers obnoxiously offering book suggestions.

After several scrolls on her For You page and several minutes of her standing still at a corner of the bookstore, I finally found her grabbing a book suggested by her favourite BookToker. Without a single peep into a book, she zoomed through bookshelves to make her way to the checkout.

The only rationale behind her book choice was that the book was suggested by her favourite BookToker and the post had more than 100k likes. Knowing that she purchased the book without her own judgement, it was pretty obvious that she quickly got disappointed by the plot and soon lost her will to finish reading.

It is undoubtedly true that BookTok has a positive impact on encouraging individuals to read books. Just as Flood writes in *The Guardian*, this trend made the reading book look cool again, and I too believe this trend helps to revive the book culture that has died down after the introduction of digital media.

But I want to question whether this trend is effective in a way to encourage individuals to have a holistic reading experience. With the aim to create buzz and interaction, most BookTokers suggest books that could increase their viewership. Thereby we see numerous BookTokers recommending the same old rom-com and fiction books that are familiar to a wide range of TikTok audiences.

However, there are many genres out there that BookTokers are missing out on. Classical to biographies, these genres may not be seen as cool as the viral TikTok books, but these can be one of the favourite genres that people just haven't realized. So I suggest, if you want to take the time to appreciate all the books that are waiting out there for you, and if you want to have a reading experience where you can build your own taste in books, visit the nearest bookstore and simply explore. Not only will you be able to enjoy the smell of the books, but you will also be able to find perfect books that are personal to you. There are simply too many interesting books out there that you can discover rather than solely consuming books that others curate for you.

Are Award Shows a Good Barometer for Artistry?

Dummie Abdul
ARTS AND CULTURE

Hot off the heels of the #Oscars-SoWhite and #MeToo movements, Hollywood's mask of glitz and glamour has slipped. A reckoning has been led by racial minorities and women, scrutinizing an industry predicated on white patriarchal ideals that have reduced their identity to disposable figures. These controversies have resulted in the prestige of the Academy Awards being dealt severe body blows, as the ceremony recorded the lowest viewership in its 'illustrious' history in 2021. What was once considered the pinnacle of cinematic artistry has lost all its credibility, and the unfathomable has happened; nobody gives a fuck who the Oscar goes to!

I would be lying if I said there was not something alluring about watching bougie celebrities host exclusive ceremonies celebrating their contributions to cinema in the most self-aggrandizing manner. Though words cannot express the overdose of serotonin I receive when witnessing award shows being put to the sword and falling into irrelevance, my only gripe is: what took so long?

2016 was a controversial year for the Academy after nominating zero racial minorities for acting the second year running, leading host Chris Rock to refer to the ceremony as the "White People's Choice Awards" during his Oscar monologue. People of colour and women make up a minority in the Oscars voting committee, which is predominantly composed of elderly white males. Unsurprisingly, the disparity reflects which group of people Hollywood considers worthy of appraisal, as 89% of nominations are for Caucasians and 71% are for men. The dominant group manipulates unbalanced voting conditions created by them to reward actors reflect their own identities, legitimizing their dominance.

I often imagine the voting committee huddled in a secret lair twirling their moustaches while laughing maniacally because they have successfully completed their master plan and rigged the show in favour of white men. Perhaps my mental image is slightly hyperbolic, and it is unlikely the corruption extends to that degree. Regardless, the Oscars are designed to be intentionally exclusionary of art that does not conform to Western ideologies. Doing so automatically disqualifies the Oscars as being a well-equipped measure of good artistry because the people voting lack a fundamental understanding of what the full spectrum of art is.

I came to my conclusion after Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola assembled to label the Marvel Cinematic Universe a lower form of cinema. A common theme in the old head directors' critiques of Marvel were that superheroes lacked intellectual value because they adhered to a repetitive formula. Upon reading their statements, I could not help but laugh at the irony and remark: "I know that ain't who I think it is."

These two genuinely believe themselves to be champions of artistic ingenuity, as if they did not direct countless movies with the exact same thematic formula and actors. If you have ever seen a movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio or Robert De Niro revolving around white dudes in organized crime rings, breaking every law under the sun for money and power, you have seen the majority of their respective filmographies. *The Godfather, The Irishman, and The Departed* all followed the Oscar bait formula to a tee and dominated their respective award-circuit years.

The notion that art is defined by its originality is clearly lost on the voters who consistently reward similar narrative frameworks. The fact that these men believe they have an authority on what constitutes true art demonstrates the pretentious nature of Hollywood. First of all, there is no such thing as "real cinema". That is not to say that

there is no such thing as good movies (do yourself a favour and watch *City of God*) or bad movies (avoid Netflix's *Death Note* at all costs); the matter simply depends on personal taste.

Art is a dynamic; artists draw from their unique inspirations before transposing their metaphysical conceptions of their world into our reality. Herein lies the issue with the Academy: cinematic contributions that do not align with their cookie-cutter definition of art are frequently denoted as low value. What is presented here is a major roadblock for marginalized creators whose salient social identities influence how they express their artistry. Their films often revolve around themes extending beyond the typical sociopolitical contexts considered in movies. The voters' elevated social status has created a myopic perspective, preventing them from empathising with individuals with dissimilar backgrounds. These movies often reject heternormative and white ideals, which the Academy may feel is a challenge against their traditional forms of art that reinforce power dynamics.

To that point, the Academy has shown my people some love—I just hate the type of movies that get us love! Denzel Washington in *Glory*, a film about the first all-Black regiment during the American Civil War; Octavia Spencer in *The Help*, where she played a maid subjected to racism during Jim Crow; and Lupita Nyong'o in *12 Years a Slave* are all examples of how the Academy loves to type-cast talent into race-related roles and regularly awards contenders centred around Black trauma. The Oscars are more than happy to exclude racial minorities from amassing any standing in their circles. However, when an opportunity arises to commodify Black pain for a golden figure, the industry is quick to virtue signal and affirm discrimination is bad.

Hollywood loves to pretend that these films tackle groundbreaking subject matter and serve to enlighten audiences on the oppression minority communities have faced. While Lupita Nyong'o getting personally victimized by a slave master for two hours did spark discourse about America's racist history, very little was done to change Hollywood's discriminatory organanizational culture. I do not mean that movies revolving around racism should never be produced. I am simply saying the continual celebration of these movies speaks to the Academy's limited view of diverse art forms. Until more uplifting components of the Black experience are valued in art, the most sure-fire way to gain recognition from awards shows as a minority is to re-enact intergenerational traumatic experiences of discrimination, assault, and dehumanization at the hands of white aggressors.

The sentiment that the Academy Awards has lost credibility needs to be slightly reworked. They never possessed credibility in the first place, and you cannot lose what you never had. We have moved away from the conception that films need recognition by exclusionary cliques to be considered excellent.

So how do we celebrate artistry now that award shows are down in the dumps? The way we always have! Spread the movie's media PR so hard that people think you are on the directors' payroll. Laugh, cry, and feel the whole spectrum of emotions as you watch spectacular stories unfold before your eyes. Use famous lines from movies in everyday language and dress like your favourite characters on Halloween. By incorporating the ideas these movies present in our lives and culture, we celebrate artistry and show creators that their films have deeply moved us. If you ask me, that holds more weight than any award decided by pompous Hollywood execs.

(My) Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows

Rishibh Prakash
ARTS AND CULTURE

One of my favorite acquisitions this winter was John Koenig's *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*. John Koenig is a wordsmith in every sense of the word; he has created new words to define the spectrum of human emotions and experiences that have so far been left uncharted by language. It might seem strange to have a book of 'made-up' words, but as Koenig himself says, "It is a calming thing, to learn there's a word for something you've felt all your life but didn't know was shared by anyone else. It's even oddly empowering." As Koenig also writes, "All words are made up. That's part of their magic."

At the end of the book, Koenig encourages the reader to come up with their own words, a remarkably empowering feeling. The beasts of life seem ever so slightly tamer after they have been named. And when the naming is done by you, it's all the better. So, below are some of the words and definitions I've come up with after reading the book—some beasts that I've tried to tame. If you enjoy this to any extent, I strongly, strongly recommend reading *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*. John Koenig is far better at this than I am.

I suspect not all the words below will be for you, but I hope at least one will.

True strike (**n.**)**:** The desire to remove the filters of politeness and language so you can see what someone is really thinking. The desire to know for certain whether someone's words mirror their mind or hinder it, whether someone's compliments come out of social pressure or a genuine impression. It is then no wonder that we latch onto insults more than compliments, which, although more painful, seem a truer reflection of your impression on the world than a friend's response to "No, tell me what you really think."

Etymology: true strike, a spell in the role-playing game of Dungeons & Dragons that gives the user insight into the target's defenses. Language is how we gain insight into each other's minds. Unlike a spell, however, it is very fallible.

Knowledge-verse (**n.**): the vast universe of knowledge underlying a statement, which in itself contains an infinity of knowledge-verses, making you wonder how we can know anything for certain. The universes that you travel through when you play the "why" game and when you put any fact under the microscope.

The sky is blue, what causes that? It's because molecules in the air scatter light from the sun, and the shorter wavelengths corresponding to blue light scatter more easily. Why is that? Oh, that's because the amount of scattering is determined by the inverse of the wavelength, raised to the fourth power. How did we work this out? What does it even mean that the light is "scattered"? Well, "scattering" is a mild simplification. In reality, the electromagnetic waves of light induce a dipole within airborne particles...

Perhaps it is maddening that every descent raises more questions than it answers; to say you understand something seems at best a farce and at worst an arrogance. Perhaps it is wonderful to know that there will always remain questions for those who will ask them; there will always remain a myriad of universes for us to explore. Perhaps this excites you to your very core. Perhaps it terrifies you to your very core. Maybe you are disappointed in how little we know of the world. Maybe you are surprised that we know anything at all. Despite all this, or maybe because of it, here we remain, saying to ourselves, "Huh, that's funny. Wonder why that is?"

Etymology: knowledge + universe, the sum total of an object. The "why" game is a frustrating one played by children and tired adults where the response to every question is "Why?". The kind of game that should come with an "Existential Crisis Guaranteed!" sticker.

Time out (**n.**)**:** The desire to stop time or at the very least pause it, so you can catch your breath without everything rushing towards you.

"There is only so much time in the world," they say with that patronizing shake of their head. "Spend it well." And so you lock yourself into that ironically-eternal battle against time, trying to wrestle back every drop you can. And the cunning Time gives you those drops freely and always at that maddeningly steady pace, which seem so filling as a child but barely quench your throat as you get older. The unceasing battle continues day and night, until all you want to say is, "Can we have a time out please?"

Oh, the time, it flies,
What I wouldn't give to shoot it dead

Etymology: time out, a break taken in many sports and games to give the players a chance to recuperate. Doesn't that sound nice. It appears to be a near-universal fact that time seems to speed up as you grow older. Most people argue that this is because each passing year represents a smaller proportion of your life. Whether this is the cause or not, it seems we may never get vacations that feel like they last a lifetime again.

Avenri (**n.**)**:** The awareness of how fragile the future is and the uncertainty of what to do with this information.

It's easy to make yourself believe that tomorrow will look like today, as will the day after and the day after and the day after... And in most cases, you would be right. But you know that life is always a hair's breadth away from turning on its head, be it from a global pandemic or a simple accident. The illusion that you have some sort of control, that the world isn't just one level above completely random, isn't a well-hidden one. But what can you possibly do about it? Follow their advice of "live every day like it's your last?" The selfish advice that ignores the people and responsibilities around you? Perhaps, the adage should instead be "live every day like it's your first" when the future felt further than it was.

It's hard to emulate the sense of wonder we felt as children. Hard to remember how we could have ever spent an entire afternoon simply watching raindrops race on the window; how we could make even the floor exciting by turning it into lava; or how simply seeing our loved ones could make us so happy. The future will come as it always does, blasting through the door when you are least expecting it. But before you turn to face it, why not take a moment to let these raindrops finish their race?

Etymology: avenir, future in French, broken with a typo. Delightfully, it ends with the same syllable as worry.

Community, Wellness, and Community Wellness
Meet Sana Imran, Meet Satisfacation

Samantha "Sam" Guevara
CHANGEMAKERS CORNER

My introduction to Sana Imran, beyond a 2021 virtual Innis College Orientation greet, took place earlier this academic year at a Wellness Advising appointment. Yet as the school term comes to an end, that interaction remains one of my most significant first-year experiences. As a new student in the fall, I investigated the support that the university and, by extension, the college supplies due to the fact that I prioritized community, wellness, and community wellness. However, I only became aware that the three priorities were concerns of mine when my research brought me to meet Sana—Innis' assistant dean — community wellness (ADCW). Prioritizing a sense of community, a state of wellness, as well as community wellness in general, are neither rare for me alone, nor is it specific to only first-years. Community wellness inevitably defines every student, faculty member, and person.

I interviewed Sana to highlight her position at Innis College as an official ADCW, and although Sana joined the Health & Wellness Supports recently as of March 22nd last year, she has had immense involvement within the Office of Student Life (OSL). If you require support and have no clue where to start, meet Sana, and meet satisfaction!

On account of friendliness and openness at the college, Sana favours ever-present energy. Faculty engagement with students is accessible and shapes community wellness for the better inside Innis. Outside Innis, Sana practices community wellness through the creation of spaces where people feel safe enough to talk, but she emphasizes that a space cannot be 100% safe—comfort at a perfect level is unrealistic. Upon this principle, Sana notices that many people think they are alone, whereas in reality, people fail to be open about struggles, and thus fail to support each other.

"People rarely hesitate to say, 'I have a doctor's appointment,' but hesitate to say, 'I have a therapy appointment'"

Attempts by Sana to unapologetically speak about wellness, or lack thereof, allow students to feel safe and included, as if there is a place to go absent of stigma and shame. Despite its success and importance, this support is new to Innis. Nonetheless, the better-late-than-never role involves student one-on-ones to explore types of support. From a session about the Multi-Faith Centre on campus, to research about therapy off-campus, Sana helps students navigate the healthcare system in both U of T and Ontario.

You may have already met Sana someplace other than an appointment, and if so, you likely saw her around the college, or she likely participated in the development of an event you attended. At the core of her role, Sana implements programs for students to "learn more about wellness needs and gain skills to follow through."

Overall, the ADCW role focuses on the college's mission to build a sense of community wellness through services, needs assessments, and tools that students can use. Upon reflection of the OSL's achievements, Sana believes her greatest achievement is one she continues to work on: personal growth.

"For me, personal growth means to be mindful and reflective about who I am or what I need then engage in activities that nourish me."

A glimpse ahead, Sana has endless plans for community wellness next year, and despite her focus on Innis, she is open to collaborating with other colleges in a post-pandemic world. The Student Wellness Advisory Group (SWAG), an initiative by Sana and the Work-Study team, discusses a Community Wellness Crew, for example. Sana intends for this project to be student spaces full of connections around topics of wellness via various streams, which range from "pathways to allyship" to "wellness for success." Another look into the future is the return of SWAG. After its launch this year, Sana considers SWAG a valuable group that she goes to with ideas and receives insightful feedback from.

Sana's indubitable passion stems from the importance of mental health in her life from when she grew up in Pakistan, immigrated to Canada as a teenager, attended university and first accessed a counsellor, and when she started work in the mental health field. Sana holds a role that she is proud of and, in her own words, is "something I always felt I wanted to do, and I feel lucky to be here able to do this now."

To go forward, Sana has two wellness recommendations for the community. Firstly, talk about mental health. Secondly, channel personal energy; "whether it is a journal, physical activity, or photography," Sana suggests, "find something that soothes you." It is important to recognize that the university life stage is one of unique growth, development, and independence, alongside challenges.

"Nobody can do it alone, and at no point should someone feel they have to do it alone".

If you wish to contribute to community wellness, keep an eye out for roles at Innis College, as there is an effort to create many student possibilities. Sana invites anyone who wishes to speak about community and mental health to meet with her or to seek out her recommended opportunities: Work-Study, the Community Wellness Crew, SWAG, mentorship or certificate programs, and community events. The most notable act Sana mentions is to figure out how to grow a support system.

Where do we as a community go from here with wellness in mind? Well, for starters, we must acknowledge the importance of community wellness. A healthier environment for all and for future generations will occur if we talk openly about how we feel, as well as if we work together to avoid isolation. Community wellness begins and ends in self-wellness.

"You choose what your wellness looks like or how you practice wellness; it comes from within. To talk to somebody can help be a space to unpack what works or what does not work so well".

SUDOKU

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MEDIUM

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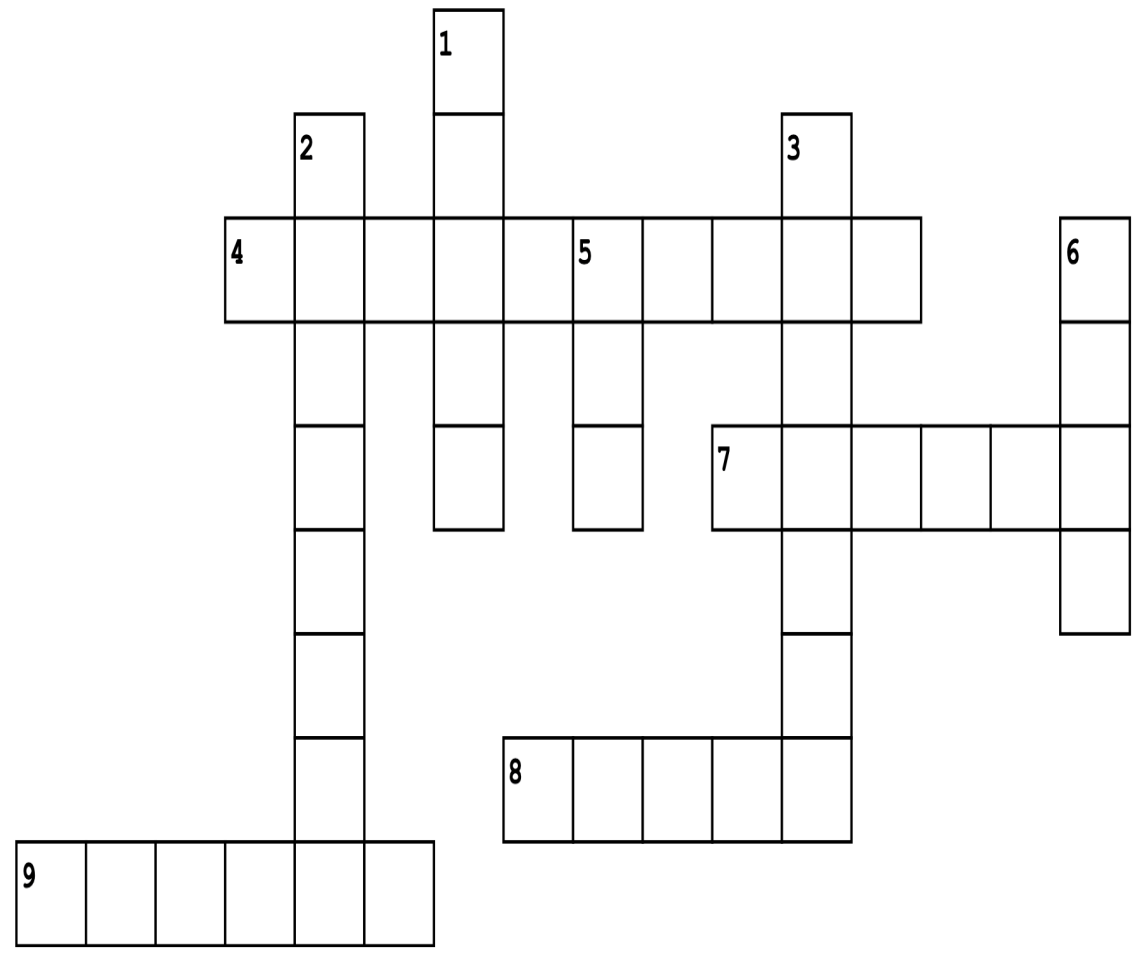
INNIS HERALD PODCAST

Join in the conversation with the Innis Herald's Masterhead as they discuss life studying at University of Toronto, share favourite song recommendations, articles, and short stories from the Innis Herald's issues.

SPRING CROSSWORD



DOWN

1. A flower associated with spring in the Netherlands
2. Jewish spring holiday
3. Muslim month-long celebration
5. Begins to flow when days are warm and nights are cold
6. Wriggles through the dirt

ACROSS

4. The Indigenous name for the moon that marks the start of spring, new beginnings, and the return of community after winter's isolation
7. Christian spring holiday
8. One of the first birds to appear in the spring
9. Bursting pink blossoms

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